

## Pathway to a Peaceful Mind

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Buddhism is very analytical and equally well comprehensive in its study of the human mind. In Buddhism, the mind is looked upon as **a complex and composite phenomenon**. At the very outset, we wish to append the word **human** to it and speak of it as the **human mind**. This is not because we reject the functioning of a **process** called **the mind in animals**, but because our primary interest here is in the study of the human mind. In its present state of development in the process of evolution [in terms of Buddhist thinking, certainly not of creation by an outside agency], the human mind has reached **an elevated and exalted level of developmental progress**, in marked contrast to that of animals.

The very word *manussa* which is used in Buddhism to denote **humans** is associated with the so-called loftiness of the mind [*manassa* (of the mind) + *ussannatāya* (on account of the loftiness) = *manussā* (humans)]. Compare and contrast the noteworthy stages in the development of the brain as reptilian, mammalian, primates etc.

As Buddhists, we associate **three functionally different words** to describe different states and stages of the so-called **mind at work**. At a conference like this, whether one is inside or outside of it, it is indispensable that those interested in a study of Buddhism have to be initiated into at least a few of its basic concepts. The words associated with the concept of mind are i. *citta* [= thoughts], ii. *mano* [= mind] and iii. *viññāṇa* [= consciousness or **Consciousness**]. Mark my words. These words do not imply static unchanging entities. They are, at all times, products of **the human mechanism in action** which is collectively **called life**.

In our **non-creationist evolutionary approach** to human life, we as Buddhists maintain that human life [leaving out animal life in the present discussion],

consists of two major components, namely: **1.** the visible and **physically tangible component of the body** and **2.** the equally important and indispensable **mentality component of the mind** which **activates all processes of sensory perception, cognitive awareness and memory** as well as each individual **personality development**.

Buddhists do believe and have to maintain the belief that this **mentality component of the human** is essentially **personal and individual**, owing no connection, loyalty or **allegiance to an external source of power**. For every single being, it has a **more-than-one-life dimension**. It reaches beyond death until one reaches in **Nirvana the end of this painful life continuance** called *samsāra*. This **Consciousness** or *viññāṇa* referred to here is the **outcome of a continuous process of evolutionary change** in man, sustaining this very life process, until its total evaporation in Nirvana.

Let us now recognize that we humans are gifted with access to the world outside through our five external sense organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and touch. They are independently connected to an internal information receiving centre within or operation headquarters which we call the **mind** [= *mano*]. The mind is internal and is the coordinator of information so received from the world outside. All such information so received through *vedanā* [= sensory cognition or perception] is identified, assessed and evaluated, by each individual being, as being good or bad [through a cognitive process called *saññā* or apperception]. At this stage, previous memories and associations of an human individual come into play, the different sense organs joining one another in the process. Closely tied up with this and inseparably so, the **human action process** [called *sarikhāra*] of **making choices to accept or reject** in terms of one's **likes and dislikes** takes place.

From the Buddhist psycho-ethical stand, **this is the most vital position with regard to human existence**, making human life healthy and wholesome or turning it into its opposite. The role of the mind [*mano*] here can be referred to as

operation-head-quarters where an incessant series of processing and production goes on. The single items which feed this process may be conveniently called **thoughts** [= *citta*]. We believe thoughts have their origin in *mano*.

Finally it must be remembered that these multiple processes are **the products** of our **individual reactions to the world outside in which we live**. It is the totality of these, like the electricity generated by a dynamo or alternator of a motor car, which provides the energy for the unending continuance of the life process of a human through a multiplicity of lives.

The *cittas* or thoughts in the day-to-day living process not only leave inedible marks on the mind or *mano* which thereby acquires its own tenor or tone [think of verses nos. 1 & 2 of the Dhammapada with *manasā ce paduṭṭhena* and *manasā ce pasannena*], but also in its turn delivers the collective ingredients of the mind to the totality of the personality *viññāṇa* of a single individual. This mind-buildup being a tremendous and incessant process, the personality *viññāṇa* makes its never-failing contribution to the long range *samsāric viññāṇa*.

It is only if what has been indicated so far about **the structure of the human mind and its behavioural pattern in relation the world in which humans live** is adequately grasped and understood, that we could possibly take up for discussion the subject given to me for explanation and presentation, namely **Pathway to a Peaceful Mind**.

The mind obviously looks out for peace because, relative to the maturity and clarity of one's mind, one becomes aware of the lack of peace in one's mind. Neither a very young child nor a person whose functioning process of the mind is below normal, we would guess, is able to sense this lack of peace. According to Buddhism, whatever may be the immediate cause of the disturbance to the mind, they all ultimately relate to three corrosive factors or qualities which are closely associated with the mind. They are i. **the acquisitive instinct** which is propelled by the need to possess [*lobha*] in the service of **one's self-conceived ego** or idea of I

and **mine**. Polarized with this, is **the desire to repel or push away** from one's presence anything and everything which does not conform to one's liking [*dosa*]. These two opposing tendencies, when they get to excessive degrees, they totally blind one's eye to reality of things. We call this delusion [*moha*].

It is when one's mind is severely torn in diverse directions that one is robbed of one's inner peace. It is things of the world that push one in the direction of being attracted to or repelled by them. This is why Buddhist thinking requires one to possess **a correct evaluation of one's self-identity** as well as **a correct assessment of the things in the world** [in terms of *anicca dukkha* and *anatta*] to which we are related every moment of our lives. Neither we nor things of the world have any enduring or lasting value. Both persons and things are of the nature of change. They are liable to perish any moment. They cannot be permanently appropriated. We must relate ourselves to the world with a dignified sense of detachment, with an ability to let go any moment we are called upon to do so.